Questions to Use to Assess your Draft Plan before Finalization

The questions outlined below will help localities self-assess their current Continuum of Care planning process to encourage a process that is inclusive and strategic, and supports the locality in implementing its Continuum of Care homeless system to maximize the movement of people who are homeless to permanent housing and increased self-sufficiency.

- Is your Continuum of Care process a year-round planning and assessment process? Is it well organized and does it efficiently use participants' time?

- Does the process meaningfully include a broad cross-section of stakeholders (e.g., homeless or formally homeless people, local and state government representatives, housing and service providers serving homeless people, elected officials, the business and civic community and advocates)? Do people participate in the process mostly because it's a HUD requirement or is there a sense of ownership of the planning process by the community of stakeholders?

- Is there a shared understanding of the structural causes of homelessness? Is there a locally-based vision and strategy for a Continuum of Care system (i.e., a seamless system of housing, services and opportunities to meet the needs of homeless people)? Is the vision a long-term strategic one or is it crisis or project-driven?

- Is there shared agreement about the methodology for identifying existing resources, needs, gaps in services and housing, and priorities for both long-term strategies and annual action plans? Is this information available in usable form? Is there an effective and ongoing process to re-assess these and regularly update these parts of the plan?

- Are the identified priorities based on the identified needs of homeless people? (Are there examples of "I have a hammer, so it looks like a nail" syndrome?)

- Is there currently a continuum of housing and services that balances emergency housing and services (tertiary) with permanent / supportive housing (primary)? Is the system seamless? If not, does the plan prioritize strategies to achieve that balance? Is there duplication of efforts in your system due to historical funding and turf issues?

- Does the process include an assessment process for the components of the system? Is there shared understanding of standards of quality and best practice? Are systems in place to monitor and report on these?

- Have new programmatic strategies and partnerships emerged as a result of the planning and collaboration process? Has your community been successful in getting additional "mainstream" (non-homeless specific) resources for permanent housing and services? Have you gotten new sources of funding or created innovative funding partnerships?

- Has the process promoted and / or enhanced collaboration and coordination among all the stakeholders in the system? Is there an effective way of building consensus and dealing with conflict?

- Does your annual action plan serve as a guide throughout the year?

- Does your community have an effective process for ranking competitive projects? Are decisions made according to the priorities identified through the planning process? If existing projects (that are still meeting current needs) are not prioritized, are other resources identified to support them? Does a cross-section of stakeholders participate in the ranking process?

- Are your homeless program planning and activities integrated within broader community development strategies (i.e., integrated within the HUD Consolidated Plan)?

Does your community need assistance working through any of the above issues? If so, HUD provides technical assistance to local communities on Continuum of Care planning. The training can be customized to your community's specific needs. If you are interested in finding more about this resource, please contact your local HUD field office staff in Community Planning and Development.